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Southern Yemen: Left-wing elements are gaining ascendancy in the new government.

Southern Yemen established diplomatic relations with Communist China on 31 January. Furthermore, Defense Minister Baidh arrived in Moscow yesterday in search of foreign aid. The Ministry of Information on 1 February admitted publicly that Baidh would be particularly interested in military assistance. The ministry, however, denied an earlier Aden radiobroadcast which had quoted Baidh as saying that Southern Yemen's British-trained army had been equipped by imperialism and that it was not possible to have an army whose arms and ammunition were in "enemy" hands.

Within Southern Yemen, the leftists are moving to cow or eliminate possible opposition. A court established to prosecute "former rulers, saboteurs, and antirevolutionary elements" has handed down its first death sentence. It condemned a member of the local nobility for what were, before independence, legitimate contacts with a British adviser.

It remains to be seen what attitude the Aden authorities will take in aid talks with the British, scheduled for a month hence. The British are not likely to continue their subsidy. The Southern Yemeni Government has not responded to low-key US offers of nonfinancial assistance, but has repeatedly asserted that it is "neutral" in its international alignment.



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Saudi Arabia - Iran: Tehran's release of a captured ARAMCO drilling barge and the prospect of eventual talks between the parties have reduced tensions.

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The same afternoon the Saudi official on the barge, who had attempted to parley with the Iranian gunboat commander, was released. He and the ARAMCO representative accompanying him returned to Saudi Arabia. Most of the ARAMCO employees on the drilling barge also were allowed to return to the mainland. A skeleton crew remained to move the ARAMCO barge out of the disputed area.

No date has been set for talks, but if a face-to-face discussion between the two monarchs is arranged, it might go far toward removing problems caused by the machinations of minor officials on both sides.

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Belgium: The linguistic dispute at Louvain University has become a political issue which could bring down the government.

The dispute arose from Flemish nationalists' demands that Louvain's French-speaking faculties and departments be moved to the French-speaking section of Belgium. Prime Minister Vanden Boeynants' coalition of Social Christian and Liberal parties has tried to avoid involvement, taking the position that it is a problem for the university authorities and the Catholic bishops who constitute the governing board.

Activists on both sides appear determined to drag the government into the dispute and interpellations on the subject are scheduled in both houses of parliament next week. The Social Christian Party has split along linguistic lines on such issues in the past. Significant numbers of negative votes or abstentions next week could lead to the resignations of some or all of the cabinet.

Vanden Boeynants apparently intends to play for time in the hope that passions will subside. He is probably counting on his party's realization that a government crisis and new elections would benefit the small opposition parties. [REDACTED]

NOTE

Guyana-Surinam: A small detachment of Surinam police reportedly has re-established itself in the border area disputed with Guyana and has orders to respond with "armed resistance" if Guyanese troops attempt to evict it. If the Guyanese discover the outpost, or if Surinam's Minister President Pengel publicly confirms its existence, Prime Minister Burnham of Guyana is likely to react sharply. The Guyanese have been stressing diplomatic maneuvers to settle the dispute, but any unexpected encounter could lead to shooting. [REDACTED]

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